



BostonConnects

people to economic opportunity

A 501(c)3 Not-For-Profit Community Organization in Partnership with the City of Boston

Winter/Spring 2004

Volume 5, Issue 1

From the Executive Director...



Christine Araujo, Executive Director

We have had a very busy Fall and look forward to an equally active Winter/Spring. Many more Zone residents are visiting our offices for referral to programs funded through Boston Connects, Inc.

Zone residents who have either participated in or completed programs have been instrumental in spreading the word about Boston Connects, Inc.'s services and programs.

Upcoming Events

EZ Tax Benefits Workshop, February 2004. Boston Connects, Inc. will host a one-day workshop on the tax benefits of locating a business in the EZ and hiring EZ residents. Accountants, tax attorneys, job developers, businesses and case managers will also hear about other tax credits that can result in significant savings for businesses. More information will be available on our website or at our offices. This event is being co-sponsored by the City of Boston.

CORI Workshop for Employers and Job Developers, March 15, 2004. Businesses, Human Resource specialists and job developers have expressed their interest in hiring Zone residents who may have been incarcerated. To support this need, we will be hosting a workshop on how to read Criminal Offender

Record Information (CORI) on March 15th, 2004. This event will take place at our offices and is being co-sponsored by Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Inc. and The Work Place.

Program Information

A pull out section in this newsletter lists the many programs that BCI funds to support Zone residents in achieving their goal of increased economic self-sufficiency. New programs are posted on our web site, www.bostonEZ.org. The site is continually updated to become even more of a resource to residents and businesses.

Congratulations and Thank You

Boston Connects, Inc. has a unique governance structure. Mayor Thomas M. Menino appoints 12 members of the Board of Directors and Zone residents elect 12. Congratulations to Gloria Coney, Joelee Baker-Bey and Robert Kinney on their re-election to the Board of Directors.

We extend a sincere thanks to Robert Harrington and Suezanne Bruce for their work on the Board this past year.

Board Meetings

Boston Connects, Inc.'s Board meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month. They are accessible to the handicapped and are open to the public.

Christine Araujo



Thomas M. Menino,
Mayor of Boston

Strategic Vision for Change

In 1994, under the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Boston became a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Enhanced Enterprise Community. In 1999, Boston was designated a HUD Empowerment Zone (EZ). The Zone includes parts of: Downtown, Chinatown, South Boston, South End, Roxbury, Mission Hill, Jamaica Plain and Dorchester. Visit www.bostonEZ.org to take a tour of the Zone or discover if you are in the Zone.

Boston's vision of "Economic self-sufficiency for individuals, families and communities" is being achieved by implementing the 1998 Strategic Plan, which addresses Economic Development, Education and Job Readiness, Health and Well Being, Technology, and Community Capacity Building.

Economic Development

We continue to watch the transformation of the Melnea Cass Boulevard/Massachusetts Avenue intersection. The 175-room Hampton Inn (under construction below) will open in June. This development will have ground floor retail, a restaurant and a parking structure. A landscaped bike path on Melnea Cass Boulevard will connect the community to the waterfront.



Site of anticipated job openings for Zone Residents at Melnea Cass Boulevard/Massachusetts Avenue

In anticipation of the permanent job openings, Corcoran Jennison Hospitality and Pilgrim Parking will, in conjunction with Boston Connects, Inc. be hosting an Open House on January 12, 2004 at the Dudley Square Library. Zone residents who are unable to make the Open House and are interested in job opportunities are encouraged to contact our offices.

Community Capacity Building

Community Capacity building is another goal of BCI's Strategic Plan. Twenty community and faith based non-profit organizations attended a series of workshops to increase their ability to apply for private grant funds. Additionally, the City of Boston's Office of Jobs and Community Services conducted two workshops, attended by 40 people/organizations, for Empowerment Zone community and faith based organizations to learn how to apply for City funding.

Education and Job Readiness

The kick-off event for Boston Connects, Inc.'s Ex-Offender Initiative was held on December 4, 2003 at the Dudley Square Library. The event was well attended by elected officials, ex-offenders, service providers, community and faith based organizations, volunteers and public safety personnel. One business owner spoke eloquently of the loyalty that staff who were ex-offenders brought to her automotive business, resulting in her on-going commitment to hiring ex-offenders. Every participant received a copy of the *Ex-Offender Initiative Action Plan*, which outlines focus areas and challenges, and recommends strategic responses for an ex-offender's transition into the workforce, community and family. The *Service Delivery Model* identifies the wrap around services necessary for both the inmate/former prisoner and families. We thank the Advisory Committee members for their on-going work on this initiative. Readers interested in receiving additional information should contact our office and are encouraged to submit a *Partnership Form*.

Human Development

This past summer, through the efforts of the Human Development Committee and the Board, 545 Zone youth between the ages of 14 and 17, and 18 year olds returning to high school were placed in summer jobs with community-based non-profit organizations and agencies. At the conclusion of the summer Zone students had a resume; a portfolio documenting progress and accomplishments; and reinforcement of educational skills.

During the next year, Boston Connects, Inc. will be working on implementing the Family Opportunity Network system. The goal of this network is to provide quality, efficient and non-duplicative continuum of care services for EZ residents, assisting their pursuit of greater economic self-sufficiency. This system will provide "one-stop shopping" so that a family's needs can be met in a comprehensive and efficient manner.

Boston Connects, Inc.'s Current Programs

One of Boston Connects, Inc.'s primary goals is to ensure that Zone residents receive the education and training they need to secure jobs and to climb their chosen career ladder.

We encourage Zone residents and providers to call us at (617) 541-2670 for more information on all programs. To verify if an address is in the Empowerment Zone, visit www.bostonEZ.org. The following is a list of programs with seats available at no cost to residents who qualify.

Community Technology Education

It is important for Zone residents to develop and sharpen their computer skills. Competence in word processing and web searches are basic skills required for most jobs and, increasingly, for educational programs and advancement. Children, youth and adults can access these opportunities:

Parker Hill/Fenway NSC (617) 445-6000
714 Parker Street, Mission Hill

South Boston Action Center (617) 269-5160
424 West Broadway, South Boston

Timothy Smith Network (617) 474-1170
232 Centre Street, Dorchester

Vine Street Community Center (617) 635-4920
339 Dudley Street, Roxbury

Intergenerational Technology Education

Boston Connects, Inc. is funding programs where the adults and children in a family together learn the basics of certain computer programs. Upon successful completion of the 10-week class, the families have access to a computer and printer; one year of internet access; and technology support. Anyone interested should contact:

Action for Boston Comm. Dev. (617) 348-6546
19 Temple Place, Boston

Madison Park Development Corp. (617) 541-3900
2201 Washington Street, Roxbury x235

Roxbury Multi-Service Center (617) 989-0209
317 Blue Hill Avenue, Roxbury

Graduate Equivalency Diploma

Most jobs require candidates to have a High School or a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED). In many instances, GED programs are at capacity and Zone residents need to wait until there is an opening. However, Boston Connects, Inc. funds additional seats specifically available to Zone residents at the following locations:

Bridge Over Troubled Waters (617) 482-5459
43 West Street, Downtown

Dimock Community Health Center (617) 442-8800
55 Dimock Street, Roxbury x1277

Graduate Equivalency Diploma at South Bay House of Corrections

While our Zone residents are incarcerated many work to earn their high school or Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED). Having the GED reduces one more barrier toward re-entry into the work force. Boston Connects, Inc is funding approximately 80 seats at the South Bay House of Corrections for residents with roots in the Empowerment Zone. For more information or if you know someone at South Bay House of Corrections who might be interested, contact:

X-Cel Adult Education (617) 522-2590
23 Vernon Street, Mission Hill

Work Readiness Training

Zone residents who have been out of the job market for a while can sharpen and enhance their work skills in these 8 to 12 week programs. Residents will receive job placement, job counseling, and information and referral services when they complete training.

Contact the following organizations to enroll:

La Alianza Hispana (617) 427-7175
409 Dudley Street, Roxbury

Women in the Building Trades (617) 929-0433
10 Southern Avenue, Dorchester

more programs on next page

Current Programs continued...

Skills Training

Boston Connects, Inc. continues its commitment to Zone residents thinking about a new career, planning a career change, or needing to upgrade skills for their current jobs. For Zone residents who qualify, this training is available at no cost.

One option is through Boston's Career Center network. At each Career Center, Zone residents will: receive a full assessment of their skills; be given a choice of programs which will meet their needs; participate in a training program; and upon successful completion, receive assistance in resume writing and a full job search.

Boston CareerLink (617) 536-1888
1010 Harrison Avenue, Roxbury

JobNet (617) 338-0809
210 South Street, Boston

WorkPlace (617) 737-0093
99 Chauncy Street, Boston

There is continuing demand for staff with skills in Appliance Repair, Medical Assisting, Property Management, Office Skills, Desktop/Web Support and Telecommunications. Seats are also available for Zone residents in the following programs:

Action for Boston Community Dev. (617) 348-6546
19 Temple Place, Boston
Appliance Repair

Dimock Community Health Center (617) 442-8800
55 Dimock Street, Roxbury x1219
Medical Assisting

Madison Park Development Corp. (617) 541-3900
2201 Washington Street, Roxbury x224
Property Management

Morgan Memorial Goodwill Ind. (617) 541-1244
1010 Harrison Avenue, Roxbury
Office Skills

Year Up (617) 542-1533
1010 Harrison Avenue, Roxbury
Computer Support

YouthBuild Boston (617) 445-8887
504 Dudley Street, Roxbury
Telecommunications

BCI Services

Boston Connects, Inc.'s staff is a resource to Empowerment Zone residents. Though we do not offer training services at our offices, we fund many programs and can be a resource in connecting people with programs that fit an individual's needs, preferences, and schedule. Please contact our offices at (617) 541-2670 or stop by our offices at 2201 Washington Street in Dudley Square.



For the most current information on Boston Connects, Inc. programs and initiatives call us at (617) 541-2670 or visit the web site at www.bostonEZ.org.

Technology

Classes on how to repair a computer filled up quickly. Programs are under way and we should be seeing placements very soon. In a continued effort to reduce the digital divide, Boston Connects, Inc. is funding the staffing of a number of centers/networks. This will provide Zone residents the opportunity to sign up for basic and advanced office-based computer courses, and to generally have better access to technology.

Tax Implications for Businesses

If you are a job developer, case manager, human resource specialist, business owner, tax attorney or accountant, it is to your benefit to understand the tax credits available to businesses. Using a combination of employee- and business-related credits can result in businesses gaining thousands of dollars in tax credits, which can affect the bottom line. Because of the increasing number of inquiries we have received, we will hold a workshop in February 2004 to explain these benefits. Remember that parts of the Financial District, Downtown Crossing, Chinatown, the Leather District, the South Boston Seaport, South End, South Boston, Roxbury, Mission Hill, and Dorchester are all in the Empowerment Zone!

Visit the BCI web site at www.bostonEZ.org for more information on the workshop and to find out whether your business is located in the Zone or if your employees are Zone residents.

Meet Program Participants



Zenaida Feliciano, BHA Housing Tenant Coordinator

Zenaida Feliciano is the single mother of two early teen-aged children who has worked hard to provide for her family in these challenging economic times. For three years she worked

as a Skycap at Logan Airport, assisting wheelchair passengers and checking travelers in at the gate. After the September 11th tragedy, Ms. Feliciano was laid off. She decided to use the time to improve her skills and enrolled in the BCI-funded *Computer & Customer Service Training* at Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries. Despite her busy schedule, Ms. Feliciano was determined to succeed and put a great deal of effort into completing the training in a timely manner. Her professional demeanor, motivation and active participation in training and job search paid off when, in August, she obtained a full time position as a Housing Tenant Coordinator at the West Broadway Housing Development, part of the Boston Housing Authority (BHA). The position is for a year and when asked what her future plans are, Ms. Feliciano says she would like to explore positions with the BHA as an interpreter.

Ms. Feliciano originates from Panama and places her family in the #1 spot in her life and heart. She enjoys spending quality time together with family, enjoying a movie or just “fun” shopping.

Meet **Barbara Pleas**.

Barbara Pleas is a Zone resident who sincerely believes in the value of giving back to one's community. After being laid off from a local Health Center, she enrolled in the *Computerized Office Skills* training program funded by BCI and offered at YMCA Training, Inc. Ms. Pleas had a general knowledge of software programs and decided to build on these skills.

Ms. Pleas also searched for a job while training and near the program's completion was invited for an interview at Rosie's Place, a sanctuary for poor and homeless women. With her new and upgraded skills, Ms. Pleas was hired as a relief worker, filling in for absent and/or vacationing permanent staff. In July she moved up to a full time, 40 hour a week, position as an HIV Advocate. She feels quite happy in her position and feels that the work is very necessary and rewarding. Additionally, she now has health and dental benefits and will be eligible for life insurance after one year on the job.

Despite several hardships in her life, including the loss of a dear friend and some negative choices, she feels positive and energized by the important work she is doing and the strides she has made towards self-sufficiency. She is heartened to give back to her community and to all those who have believed in her.

Boston Connects, Inc. Board of Directors

Officers

Michael A. Vance, *President*
Robert Kinney, *Vice-President*
Mike Foley, *Treasurer*
Gloria Coney, *Clerk*

Members

Joelee Baker-Bey, *Roxbury*
Rev. Gerald Bell, *Southern
Missionary Baptist Church*
Ralph Cooper, *Veterans Benefits
Clearinghouse*
Julia Flashner, *South Boston*
Michael Glavin, *Fleet Bank*
Charlotte Golar Richie, *DND,
City of Boston*
Betty Greene, *Roxbury*
George Greenidge, *National
Black College Alliance*
Joanne K. Hilferty, *Morgan
Memorial Goodwill Ind.*

Mark Maloney, *Boston
Redevelopment Authority*
Elizabeth Miranda, *Dorchester*
Valerie Pruitt, *Roxbury*
Frederick Umeh, *Roxbury*
Juanita B. Wade, *Human
Services, City of Boston*
John A. Wagner, *Massachusetts
EOHHS*
Thomas Yee, *Horizon Associates*

Ex-Officio Members

John Auerbach, *Boston Public
Health Commission*
Congressman Michael Capuano,
*U.S. House of
Representatives, 8th District*
Daniel Conley, *Suffolk County
District Attorney*
Brian Cresta, *U.S. Dept. of
Health & Human Services*

Tony Fonseca, *Boston Police
Department*
Rep. Gloria Fox, *Mass. House of
Representatives*
Sen. John Hart, Jr., *Mass. State
Senate*
Sandra Henriquez, *Boston
Housing Authority*
Rep. Shirley Owens-Hicks,
*Mass. House of
Representatives*
Councilor James Kelly, *Boston
City Council*
Senator Edward Kennedy,
United States Senate
Senator John Kerry, *United
States Senate*
Congressman Stephen Lynch,
*U.S. House of
Representatives, 9th District*
Thomas Payzant, *Boston Public
Schools*

Councilor Michael Ross,
Boston City Council
Rep. Byron Rushing, *Mass.
House of Representatives*
Diana Salemy, *Mass.
Department of Economic
Development*
Rep. Jeffrey Sanchez, *Mass.
House of Representatives*
R.K. "Shelley" Schwartz, *U.S.
Minority Business
Development Agency*
Rep. Marie St. Fleur, *Mass.
House of Representatives*
Councilor Charles Turner,
Boston City Council
Rep. Brian Wallace, *Mass.
House of Representatives*
Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, *Mass.
State Senate*
Councilor Charles Yancey,
Boston City Council



Boston Connects, Inc.
2201 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02119



Thomas M. Menino,
Mayor

Economic self-sufficiency for individuals, families and communities.